

Nuke-powered sub makes historic stop

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

A port call in the Faroe Islands this week marked the first-ever visit by a U.S. nuclear-powered submarine to the North Atlantic archipelago, the Navy said.

The USS Delaware's stop at the capital of Torshavn on Monday follows a similar visit by a U.S. nuclear-powered submarine in Iceland that came amid rising NATO and U.S. concerns about significant Russian underwater activity in the Atlantic Ocean.

The Faroe Islands and the High North are vital areas for U.S. submarine operations, Rear Adm. Stephen Mack, director of mar-

itime operations for U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa, said in a statement Tuesday.

In April, the USS San Juan made a stop for supplies and personnel off the coast of Iceland after such brief visits were approved with assurances the country and its territorial waters would remain free of nuclear weapons.

That stopover came as Army Gen. Christopher Cavoli, the top U.S. military officer in Europe, told a congressional committee that Russian submarine patrols in the Atlantic were at higher levels than those seen in years.

The port call by Delaware, a Virginia

class attack submarine, also comes after a Faroese government restriction earlier this month limited Russian access to its ports solely to fishing boats.

The self-governing island group, part of Denmark, is working to reduce the risk of espionage and has faced criticism following renewal of a bilateral fisheries accord with Russia in November, the news service Agence France-Press reported June 1.

The Faroe Islands comprise 18 mountainous islands located halfway between Iceland and Scotland in the North Atlantic. It has a population of about 50,000, of which about 40% is in Torshavn.

Ukraine offensive faces mines, manpower challenges

The Washington Post

Ukrainian forces are navigating giant minefields and mounting initial attacks on Russian positions along a sprawling front line, U.S. and Ukrainian officials said, as Kyiv takes the first, halting steps of what is expected to be a prolonged and punishing counteroffensive campaign.

Ukrainian officials said they have thus far reclaimed about 50 square miles in the country's south from Russian forces, which have spent months hardening fortifications and positioning reinforcements in their bid to protect territory seized since President Vladimir Putin's 2022 invasion.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said last week that the offensive was moving "slower than desired" since it began this month, but that an operation against an adversary with a deeper arsenal and a far larger force shouldn't be expected to unfold at an action-movie pace.

A U.S. military official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive battlefield assessments, said Ukraine's military was now "fighting through the initial security zone" before hurling the bulk of its manpower at Russia's main lines.

"You don't commit your whole force until you have an idea of where the areas are where you're going to find the most success," the official said. "The Ukrainians have to figure out where the Russian defenses are the weakest and most porous."

The operation is unfolding as Western offi-

cials are assessing the fallout of the stunning weekend rebellion by mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin, whose forces have played a key role in expanding Russia's combat power in Ukraine. The incident underscored the deep strains the war has caused within Russia and injected a new element of unpredictability into the conflict's course.

American officials have cautioned against drawing conclusions in the offensive's early weeks and said the absence of traditional offensive moves — akin to the advancing armored columns of World War II — does not indicate trouble but rather a new sort of 21st-century maneuver warfare, one that has included probing strikes, sabotage attacks behind enemy lines, and artillery and missile strikes deep into Russian-held areas.

But the recaptured areas, which Ukrainian officials have said include at least a half-dozen villages near the borders of the eastern Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia regions, represent a tiny fraction of the vast area the Kremlin controls, which still amounts to roughly a fifth of the country.

The limited scale of the gains to date is a reminder of the challenges Zelenskyy faces in his effort to force Putin to reconsider his desire to cement control over much of Ukraine. The Russian leader has sought to sow doubts about Ukraine's battlefield prowess, arguing without evidence that Kyiv has suffered losses exponentially greater than Russia's and that much of its Western-donated weaponry has

already been destroyed.

"Everything with which they fight and everything that they use is brought in from the outside," he told the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in recent days. "You can't fight for long like that."

Putin has claimed that Western tanks, including German-donated Leopards, have been destroyed and that Ukraine has lost 923 tanks and armored vehicles since June 4. He vowed that F-16 fighter jets, which some European nations are now working to supply, "will also burn, there is no doubt."

Throughout the war, neither government has provided a reliable accounting of its combat casualties, though U.S. assessments revealed earlier this year suggest those figures are astronomical.

In areas north of the war-scarred city of Bakhmut, Russian forces are attempting their own offensive thrusts, which a senior Ukrainian official said were blocked this week, even as the Kremlin continues its regular standoff strikes on Ukrainian cities.

Despite Putin's warnings, Ukraine's backers in the West are continuing to supply Ukraine with an expanding array of weapons, including British Storm Shadow cruise missiles, which have increased Kyiv's reach into Russian-held territory. On Tuesday, the Biden administration said it was sending an additional \$500 million in military aid, including dozens of armored vehicles to augment or replace those damaged or destroyed.

Taiwan tracks pair of Russian warships

By ALEX WILSON
Stars and Stripes

Taiwan scrambled aircraft and dispatched ships late Tuesday to monitor the passage of two Russian warships off its eastern coast, according to the island's Ministry of National Defense.

Two Russian frigates traveled northward along the coast toward the East China Sea around 11 p.m. Tuesday, the ministry said in a news release Tuesday. It did not specify how far offshore the ships were.

In response, Taiwan's military used "joint intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance methods" and "dispatched mission aircraft, ships and shore-mounted missile systems to closely monitor" the Russian vessels, according to the release.

The ships continued on course and left Taiwan's "response area" southeast of Suao, a city on the island's northeastern edge that is also home to a logistics support naval base, according to the Defense Ministry.

While Taiwan reports near-daily activity from the Chinese military off its western coast in the Taiwan Strait — 49 Chinese aircraft and 20 ships have been reported in the waterway since Sunday — Russian activity is less common.

The warships' passage comes less than a week after the Wagner Group, a Russian paramilitary outfit, organized a brief, two-day rebellion against the Russian government that began Friday with the group taking over military headquarters in Rostov-on-Don and concluded Saturday after they stood

down and withdrew from the city.

It also comes just over a week after Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Beijing to meet with high-level Chinese officials, including President Xi Jinping, which Blinken described as "candid and constructive" but failed to secure the United States' top priority of renewed communication between the two countries' militaries.

Beijing considers Taiwan, a functionally independent democracy, to be a breakaway province and aims to reunite it with the mainland.

China and Russia remain close allies, with the two countries regularly coordinating military exercises together, although Beijing has not openly endorsed Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Oldest daily newspaper on Guam goes all-digital

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

News consumers on Guam have one less option available on the small U.S. territory after the Pacific Daily News published its final print edition on March 31.

Meanwhile, the paper's main competitor, the Guam Daily Post, stopped selling printed copies in the island's 11 Navy Exchange stores in January, exchange spokeswoman Kristine Sturkie said in an email June 20.

The Pacific Daily News — founded in 1950 as the Guam Daily News — based the decision to curtail its print edition on readership trends and resources, according to a March 27 statement on its website. It had suspended its Saturday and Sunday editions in January.

"Guam's readers have shown us that they prefer to receive their news via our digital platforms," Rindraty Celes Limtia-co, the newspaper's president, said in the statement. She promised to continue producing "the best news content on Guam."

Former Daily News publisher Lee Webber called the move a "cruel joke."

"With the death of the Pacific Daily News print edition, we are once again a community with only one daily newspaper of general circulation," he wrote in a May 2 opinion piece. "Even more importantly, we are dealing with a Fourth Estate that has lost track of its original and much-needed purpose in a democratic republic. That of being the watchdog on government, community informant and a beacon of freedom for its readership."

The Post continues to print a newspaper on the island of 170,000, including 18,000 active-duty service members and their families.

Though it's no longer available at the Navy Exchanges, the Post can be purchased from a coin-operated box at the Wendy's restaurant on Naval Base Guam and island-wide through home delivery, a service that includes U.S. military installations, Guerrero said.

US base workers in Italy to strike on contract demands

By BRIAN ERICKSON
Stars and Stripes

U.S. military installations in Italy are facing potential disruptions this week after two unions representing 4,000 Italian workers announced strikes scheduled for Thursday and Friday.

The two-day walkout could affect a range of services that employ the workers, including exchanges, food courts, child care facilities and vehicle registration offices, military officials said.

At Army and Air Force bases, such as U.S. Army Garrison Italy in Vicenza and Camp Darby near Livorno, it is planned for Thursday. The work stoppage is scheduled Friday at Navy bases in Naples and Sicily, according to a June 8 statement posted to the website of one of the unions.

The contract between the workers and U.S. military installations in Italy expired Oct. 30, 2021, according to the union statement. The union did not immediately respond Wednesday to a Stars and Stripes request for further comment. The workers want a new agreement and for

the U.S. military in Italy to address several issues, including improvements in communication with the unions, the statement said.

Base services and operations staffed by union-represented workers could be reduced or closed, much like what happens on Italian holidays, the Army garrison said on its official Facebook page Tuesday. Army officials also advised supervisors to use telework for affected personnel.

While the strike includes all workers represented by the unions, demonstrations are planned only in Vicenza on Thursday and at Naval Support Activity Naples on Friday.

The Vicenza demonstration could include a sit-in and a march to the main gate, the garrison said in its Facebook post.

NSA Naples expected similar impacts. In a basewide message sent Tuesday, officials warned that traffic flow at its Capodocchino and Support Site locations could be worse because of the strike.

Airline delays get worse before holiday weekend

Associated Press

Travelers were getting hit with delays at U.S. airports again early Wednesday, an ominous sign heading into the long July 4 holiday weekend, which is shaping up as the biggest test yet for airlines that are struggling to keep up with surging numbers of passengers.

As of early morning, nearly 1,300 flights had been delayed in the United States, according to FlightAware. Cancellations neared 700 flights.

Cancellations and delays were most severe along the East Coast early and were growing worse rapidly. Disruptions are expected to spread West.

The delays are being com-

pounded by thunderstorms that raked the Northeast on Tuesday. At various times, the Federal Aviation Administration held up flights bound for LaGuardia Airport in New York and Reagan Washington National and Baltimore-Washington airports near the nation's capital.

About 6,500 flights were delayed and about 1,900 canceled on the East Coast on Tuesday. United Airlines, with a major hub in Newark, N.J., canceled about 500 flights or 18% of its schedule, and JetBlue canceled 16% of its flights, according to FlightAware.

Call it the storm before the storm.

Travel has picked up steadily every year since bottoming out during the pandemic and on Tuesday, the number of people flying neared 2.4 million, up 11% from last year on the same day, according to the Transportation Security Administration.

Travel is expected to peak on Thursday with more than 52,500 total flights, likely the biggest travel day of the holiday period.

If large numbers of passengers are stranded or delayed this weekend, expect federal officials and the airlines to blame each other for the mess.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, whose department includes the FAA, has

been beating up on the airlines for more than a year. He has accused them of failing to live up to reasonable standards of customer service and suggested that they are scheduling more flights than they can handle.

The airlines are punching back.

United Airlines CEO Scott Kirby blamed a shortage of federal air traffic controllers for massive disruptions last weekend at its Newark hub.

"We estimate that over 150,000 customers on United alone were impacted this weekend because of FAA staffing issues and their ability to manage traffic," Kirby wrote in a memo to employees Tuesday night.

Nearly a dozen West Texas deaths blamed on heat dome

Associated Press

West Texas could see scorching temperatures that are blamed for nearly a dozen deaths return to a more typical level by the weekend as a heat dome is expected to move eastward, a National Weather Service meteorologist said Wednesday.

Daily temperatures have exceeded 100 degrees and heat indexes have topped 115 degrees, leading to deaths that include nine people in Webb County, which includes Laredo.

"We don't see this in our county. Laredo knows heat. Webb County knows heat," county Medical Examiner Dr. Corine Stern told county commissioners during a meeting Monday. "These are unprecedented temperatures."

Two Florida hikers also died while hiking in extreme heat at Big Bend National Park.

The scorching temperatures were brought on by a heat dome that has taxed the Texas power grid and brought record highs to parts of the state, according to meteorologists.

That dome is spreading eastward and by the weekend is expected to be centered over the mid-South, said meteorologist Bryan Jackson with the National Weather Service in College Park, Md.

Texas temperatures should then begin to drop from highs above 100 degrees to daily temperatures in the 90s, Jackson said.

"It's relief from the extreme heat," Jackson said. "It's not really an end to a heat wave; it's just an end to the extreme part of the heat wave."

Another dome of heat has already developed on the West Coast, and an excessive heat warning is in place in a wide swath in the central part of the state, according to Jackson.

"By this weekend, there is a risk for record high temperatures exceeding 100 degrees ... close to 110 degrees in the Central Valley of California," Jackson said. "Then some of the more typical mid-summer heat of getting above 115 degrees in the hottest areas of the desert Southwest."

Over 1K people told to leave as fire threatens Arizona homes

Associated Press

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — A brushfire threatened dozens of homes in northern Scottsdale and prompted evacuations as about 250 firefighters aided by air tankers battled the blaze, fire officials said.

More than 1,000 people were under evacuation orders Tuesday night, authorities said.

The blaze, called the Diamond Fire, broke out at about 5:15 p.m. and within hours had burned 3.9 square miles of land without any containment, fire officials said. The fire was near McDowell Mountain Regional Park.

Carlos Aguirre lives in a new community in north Scottsdale and said his wife called saying that their community was being evacuated.

"She got out and didn't take the dog, so we're a little nervous," he said.

Brendan Birdoes said he is building a home in the area that was being evacuated.

"Our friend told us this was happening," Birdoes said. "He was out here mountain biking and so we came out to see what

was going on."

No homes had burned and no injuries were reported. There was no immediate word on what sparked the fire.

Scottsdale Fire Capt. David Folio said at a news conference that the fire began in Scottsdale but has since moved into county and state lands to the east and the command post has been turned over to the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management.

Officials have not been able to assess damage, forestry department spokesperson Tiffany Davila said.

"The fire was just too active," she said. "It was producing erratic fire behavior."

The fire has been fueled by grass and brush that dry out quickly once things start to warm up, Davila said.

"We're about a month behind," she said. "This is the activity that we usually see in May. But because we had all of that winter and spring moisture, we're delayed for our start. So now is really the time we could start seeing an uptick in our fire activity."

France heightens security after police shoot teen

Associated Press

NANTERRE, France — France's government on Wednesday announced heightened police presence around Paris and other big cities and called for calm after scattered violence erupted over the death of a 17-year-old delivery driver who was shot and killed during a police check.

The killing prompted nationwide concern and widespread messages of indignation and condolences, including from soccer star Kylian Mbappe. French President Emmanuel Macron called the young man's death "inexplicable and inexcusable."

It also triggered unrest in multiple towns around Paris. Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said 31 people were arrested, 25 police officers injured and 40 cars burned.

The tensions focused around the Paris suburb of Nanterre, where lawyers say 17-year-old Nael M. was killed Tuesday during a traffic check. The police officer suspected of firing on him was detained and faces potential manslaughter charges, according to the Nanterre prosecutor's office.

The Nanterre neighborhood where Nael lived remained on edge Wednesday morning, with police on guard around the regional administration, and burned car wreckage and overturned garbage bins still visible in

some areas. Bouquets of orange and yellow roses were tied to the post where the car crashed after the shooting, on Nanterre's Nelson Mandela Square.

Nael's mother appealed online for a silent march on Thursday in her son's honor, near the scene of his death.

Videos purported to be of the incident were "extremely shocking," Darmanin said, pledging a full investigation. The images show two police officers leaning into the driver-side window of a yellow car, before the vehicle pulls away as one officer fires into the window. The car is later seen crashed into a post nearby.

Asked about police abuses, Macron said justice should be allowed to run its course.

"Nothing justifies the death of a young person," he told reporters in Marseille.

Darmanin said 1,200 police were deployed overnight and 2,000 would be out in force Wednesday in the Paris region and around other big cities to "maintain order."

Deadly use of firearms is less common in France than in the United States. Tuesday's death unleashed anger in Nanterre and other towns, including around housing projects where many residents struggle with poverty and discrimination and feel police abuse is under-punished.

Italy looking for tourist seen carving names into Colosseum

Associated Press

ROME — Italy's culture and tourism ministers have vowed to find and punish a tourist who was filmed carving his name and that of his apparent girlfriend in the wall of the Colosseum in Rome, a crime that resulted in hefty fines in the past.

The message reading "Ivan+Haley 23" appeared on the Colosseum at a time when Romans already were complaining about hordes of tourists flooding the Eternal City in record numbers this season. A fellow tourist, Ryan Lutz, of Orange, Calif., filmed the incident and posted the video on YouTube and Reddit.

The video received over 1,500 social media views and was picked up by Italian media. Lutz told The Associated Press on Tuesday he was "dumbfounded" that someone would deface such an important monument.

Culture Minister Gennaro Sangiuliano called the writing carved into the almost 2,000-year-old Flavian Amphitheater "serious, undignified and a sign of great incivility." He said he hoped the culprits would be found "and punished according to our laws."

Italian news agency ANSA noted that the incident marked the fourth time this year that such graffiti was reported at the Colosseum. It said whoever was responsible for the latest episode risked \$15,000 in fines and up to five years in prison.

Tourism Minister Daniela Santanche said she hoped the tourist would be sanctioned "so that he understands the gravity of the gesture." Calling for respect for Italy's culture and history, she vowed: "We cannot allow those who visit our nation to feel free to behave in this way."

Lutz, who is on a two-month backpacking trip through Europe, said he had just finished a guided tour of the Colosseum on Friday when he saw the person "blatantly carving his name" in the Colosseum wall. Lutz told the AP he took out his phone to film the man because he was so shocked at what he was doing.

Lutz, a graduate of Cal Poly Pomona, said he tried to get a guard to take action, but neither the guard nor his supervisor did anything, even after Lutz identified the man.

London jury seated for trial about Kevin Spacey's sexual harassment

Associated Press

LONDON — Two-time Oscar winner Kevin Spacey walked into a London courtroom Wednesday to face trial on charges of sexually assaulting four men as long as two decades ago. The actor was dressed in a dark blue suit, light blue shirt and pink tie as he was called by his full name and asked if he was Kevin Spacey Fowler.

"I am," he said as he stood behind a window in the dock.

Spacey, 63, has pleaded not guilty to a dozen charges including sexual assault, indecent assault and causing a person to engage in sex activity without consent. He could face a prison sentence if convicted.

Spacey nodded and smiled at potential jurors as Justice Mark Wall told them that

they may know Spacey by name or have seen his films.

More than two dozen entered the courtroom and the first 14 were seated without objection from the prosecution or defense. Thirteen people were then excused.

Spacey stood with his hands clasped behind his back as nine men and five women, including two alternates, were sworn in as jurors to hear evidence in the case expected to last four weeks in Southwark Crown Court.

"I do solemnly, sincerely and truly declare and affirm that I will faithfully try the defendant and give true verdicts according to the evidence," jurors asserted.

Opening statements are scheduled Friday.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Day care employee charged for child porn

NH CONCORD — A New Hampshire woman who worked at a Massachusetts day care center is accused of taking sexually explicit photos of children and sending them to a former partner.

Lindsay Groves, 38, of Hudson, was charged Thursday with sexual exploitation of children and distribution of child pornography. According to federal investigators, she took nude photos of children at Creative Minds in Tyngsboro, Mass., and texted them to “an individual with whom she was previously in an intimate relationship.”

Massachusetts authorities did not identify Groves’ former partner. But according to Nashua Police, the same investigation led to the arrest of a former state lawmaker who is charged in New Hampshire with distributing child sex abuse images.

Stacie Laughton, of Derry, resigned from the New Hampshire House in December after being charged with stalking Groves.

Hackers steal info on pilot applicants

TX DALLAS — Personal information for more than 8,000 applicants to become pilots at American Airlines and Southwest Airlines was stolen when hackers broke into a data base maintained by a recruiting company.

The breach at Austin, Texas-based Pilot Credentials occurred April 30, and the airlines learned about it on May 3. They notified affected job seekers last week.

According to letters that the airlines were required to file with regulators in Maine, hackers gained access to names, birth dates, Social Security and passport numbers, and driver and pilot-license numbers of applicants for pilot and cadet jobs.

According to filings, 5,745 applicants to American and 3,009 at Southwest were affected.

Florida man who killed 2 sentenced to death

FL FORT MYERS — A judge in southwest Florida handed down a death sentence Monday for a man convicted of killing an 11-year-old girl and her babysitter more than 30 years ago.

Lee Circuit Judge Robert Branning was following last month’s 10-2 jury recommendation in favor of death for Joseph Zieler, according to court records. The same panel had found Zieler, 61, guilty of two counts of first-degree murder.

Zieler was jailed on an unrelated assault charge in 2016 when his DNA matched to the cold-case murders of Robin Cornell, 11, and Lisa Story, 32, authorities said.

NYC will add Diwali as a public school holiday

NY NEW YORK — New York City will add the festival of Diwali to the list of public school holidays in recognition of the growth of the city’s South Asian and Indo-Caribbean communities, Mayor Eric Adams announced Monday.

Diwali, known as the festival of lights, happens October or November, depending on the lunar calendar.

This year, however, it falls on Sunday Nov. 12 — meaning the 2023-24 school calendar will not be affected by the change.

The new holiday will become official if Gov. Kathy Hochul, also a Democrat, signs a bill passed by the New York state legislature earlier this month making Diwali a public school holiday in New York City.

Dolphin moms use baby talk to call to their kids

DC WASHINGTON — You know instantly when someone is speaking to an infant or small child. It turns out that dolphin mothers also use a kind of high-pitched baby talk.

A study published Monday found that female bottlenose dolphins change their tone when addressing their calves. Researchers recorded the signature whistles of 19 mother dolphins in Florida, when accompanied by their young offspring and when swimming alone or with other adults.

The dolphin signature whistle is a unique and important signal — akin to calling out their own name.

When directing the signal to their calves, the mother’s whistle pitch is higher and her pitch range is greater than usual, according to the study published in the journal, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Opioid deal distribution set to begin soon

WV CHARLESTON — West Virginia is finalizing the leadership for a newly created foundation tasked with distributing the li-

on’s share of the more than \$1 billion in opioid lawsuit-settlement money coming to the state with the nation’s highest overdose death rate.

That means funding for opioid treatment and addiction services can soon begin going out to communities after years of litigation, Attorney General Patrick Morrisey said.

Morrisey said the state has hired the Arlington, Va.-based search firm DRiWaterstone Human Capital to find an executive director for the West Virginia First Foundation, the private nonprofit that will distribute just under three quarters of the money. About a quarter will go directly to counties and a small percentage will be held in trust.

Drivers to pay extra tolls to cut congestion

NY NEW YORK — New York has received a critical federal approval for its first-in-the-nation plan to charge big tolls to drive into the most visited parts of Manhattan, part of an effort to reduce traffic, improve air quality and raise funds for the city’s public transit system.

The program could begin as soon as the spring of 2024, bringing New York City into line with places like London, Singapore, and Stockholm that have implemented similar tolling programs.

Under one of several tolling scenarios under consideration, drivers could be charged as much as \$23 a day to enter Manhattan south of 60th Street, with the exact amount still to be decided by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

— From wire reports

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MLB trying to lure more Black US players

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Zion Rose is well aware that the percentage of Black U.S. players in Major League Baseball has been on the decline for decades.

But the 18-year-old catcher from Chicago, still sweaty from a workout during MLB's Draft Combine this week at Chase Field in Phoenix, said he's got some news: That's not going to be the case for long.

"You'll see," he said. "We're starting to come through."

Rose was one of more than 300 players of all backgrounds in Phoenix this week to take part in the combine, which featured workouts, interviews and games in an effort to showcase some of the game's best amateur talent at the high school and college levels before July's draft. MLB said that approximately 15% of the players in the showcase were Black.

The hope is that the next Aaron Judge, Mookie Betts or Andrew McCutchen will be in that bunch. Possibly several.

A recent study from The In-

stitute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport at Central Florida found Black U.S. players represented just 6.2% of players on MLB opening day rosters, down from last year's previous record low of 7.2%. Both figures are the lowest recorded in the study since it began in 1991, when 18% of players were Black. Last year's World Series was the first since 1950 without a U.S.-born Black player.

There are tangible reasons to believe the percentage of Black players might go up soon.

Four of the first five players picked in last summer's amateur draft were Black for the first time ever. Those four were among the hundreds who had participated in diversity initiatives such as the MLB Youth Academy, DREAM Series and the Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) program. MLB has also pledged \$150 million in a 10-year partnership with the Players Alliance. The nonprofit organization of current and former players works to increase Black involvement at all levels.

Many of those programs started several years ago, and the younger participants are starting to hit draft-eligible age.

Rose is among them. He said the diversity initiatives didn't just provide exposure to scouts, but also opened a vital pipeline for minority players to connect, share experiences and see faces similar to their own. The catcher said that Black former MLB players and coaches were also in attendance at many of the tournaments, providing role models. He cited Reds pitcher Hunter Greene as a big influence.

"I met most of my best friends at those camps," Rose said. "Just being able to see people your color playing the game, being able to relate to them, that's been important."

Homer Bush Jr. — whose dad played in the big leagues for seven seasons for the Blue Jays, Yankees and Marlins — said baseball is also doing a better job of being social media savvy. The outfielder just finished his junior season in col-

lege at Grand Canyon.

Bush said it's important that baseball portrays itself as a fun sport. Baseball's trend of elaborate celebrations for home runs and big hits — like Pittsburgh's swashbuckling routine — is a good start.

He also said he believes having more Black players in the big leagues should create a snowball effect that brings more young minority players into the game.

"I could talk about it for hours," Bush said. "But I feel like one of the biggest things is just representation. I had a dad who played in the big leagues, so I had someone to look up to and admire. But most guys — when you click on MLB Network or ESPN — there's not a ton of Black baseball players."

Of course, there are other variables to getting more minority players to the big leagues — mainly money and time.

Simply put, developing a big-league ballplayer is usually expensive.

Ohtani fans 10, hits 2 homers in win over White Sox

Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Shohei Ohtani's combination of power and pitching is unmatched by any player in baseball.

On Tuesday, the superstar from Japan used them to accomplish something that had not been done by an American League pitcher in nearly 60 years.

Ohtani hit two homers and struck out 10 Chicago batters in the Los Angeles Angels' 4-2 victory over the White Sox, adding another extraordinary performance in what has been one of his best months since coming to the majors in 2018.

"We're seeing things every day that we've never seen before and you try not to take it for granted. I don't think many of

us do," manager Phil Nevin said.

Ohtani, who leads the majors with 28 home runs, hit solo shots in the first and seventh innings, the first time he has gone deep twice while also pitching. The second blast came after he threw 6½ innings, but came out because of a cracked fingernail.

"It was a small crack before the game and gradually got worse. I came out of the game before it got too bad so the plan is to go on schedule," Ohtani said through his interpreter.

The last AL player before Ohtani to hit at least two homers and strike out at least 10 was Cleveland's Pedro Ramos on July 31, 1963. That came in the nightcap of a doubleheader against the Angels.

It has been done four other times in the majors: by Baltimore's Milt Pappas (1961), Philadelphia's Rick Wise (1971), San Francisco's Madison Bumgarner (2017) and Arizona's Zack Greinke (2019).

"The first one came in a good spot to give us the lead. The second one gave us an insurance run," Ohtani said.

Ohtani (7-3) struck out at least 10 for the sixth time in 16 starts and allowed one run on four hits and two walks. He leads the majors in opponent batting average (.180) and is third in strikeouts with 127.

Ohtani's 3.02 ERA nearly mirrors his batting average, which is .304 after he went 3-for-3 with a walk.

"He's extremely talented.

He's probably the best player in the game. He was tough to hit and he's tough to pitch to," Chicago manager Pedro Grifol said.

The last AL starting pitcher to hit multiple home runs was Boston's Sonny Siebert on Sept. 2, 1971, against Baltimore. The designated hitter was introduced to the league two years later.

"Every game somehow seems to get even crazier watching him play," catcher Chad Wallach said. "To watch him pitch like that and then go hit two homers, it somehow still surprises you every time."

Mike Moustakas had two hits and an RBI in his second start since being acquired from Colorado Saturday night.

Nimmo, Peterson lift slumping Mets

Associated Press

NEW YORK — The slumping New York Mets did their best to ensure team owner Steve Cohen had a good result before his planned state-of-the-team press conference.

Brandon Nimmo homered twice and David Peterson threw six scoreless innings in his return to the majors on Tuesday night as the Mets beat the Milwaukee Brewers 7-2, hours after Cohen announced plans to speak to the press Wednesday for the first time since opening day.

The Mets won for the third time in 10 games and for the sixth time in 22 games.

Cohen grabbed everyone's attention earlier Tuesday when he tweeted: "I will be doing a press conference tomorrow before the game. You will get it from me straight."

Hours later, general manager Billy Eppler — who built the team that began the season with a record \$355 million payroll — held a rare press conference in the Mets' dugout before the game.

"We know we have all the pieces, it's just putting it together," Nimmo said. "Obviously, Billy put this team together for a reason. He believes in it and we believe in it as well. But we just need to put the pieces together this season."

Nimmo opened the fourth with a 422-foot homer, the first of four by the Mets. Francisco Lindor hit his 200th career homer with one out and Nimmo hit a 396-foot, two-run homer just beyond the left-center field fence in the fifth.

Dodgers 5, Rockies 0: Clayton Kershaw carried a no-hitter into the sixth inning, J.D. Martinez homered twice to reach 300 for his career, and visiting Los Angeles blanked Colorado.

Kershaw (10-4) gave up one hit and faced the minimum in six innings, throwing only 79 pitches. He struck out two. He got the first two batters in the sixth be-

fore Brenton Doyle looped a 2-2 curveball between third and short to end his no-hit bid. Evan Phillips picked up his 11th save.

Martinez hit a two-run shot in the third and led off the sixth with his 18th homer of the season.

Diamondbacks 8, Rays 4: Corbin Carroll and Christian Walker hit back-to-back homers in a five-run first, Evan Longoria also homered against his former team and host Arizona beat Tampa Bay.

Ketel Marte also homered for the Rays, who still have the best record in the big leagues at 54-28, but have lost six of their last nine games.

The D-backs scored five runs in the first off Rays starter Taj Bradley. Carroll hit a three-run homer to center and Walker followed with a solo homer to left field. Gabriel Moreno's sacrifice fly made it 5-0.

Athletics 2, Yankees 1: Paul Blackburn pitched into the sixth inning, allowing one run on Josh Donaldson's homer in his return to the lineup in host Oakland's win over New York.

The slumping Donaldson connected in the fifth in his first action since Friday, but that was it for New York.

Seth Brown homered for the second consecutive day as the last-place A's beat the Yankees for the first time this season after they were swept in a three-game series in the Bronx in May.

Braves 6, Twins 2: Ronald Acuña Jr. hit two of Atlanta's five homers — all in the first two innings — in a win over visiting Minnesota.

Acuña sparked the barrage of long balls by hitting Ryan's first pitch into the Braves' bullpen in right field. The Braves lead the majors with 146 homers. They hit five homers in their first 10 at-bats in winning their fourth straight game and 12th in 13 outings.

Austin Riley hit a two-run shot and Sean Murphy also hit a hom-

er in the Braves' four-run first inning. Michael Harris II and Acuña added back-to-back shots in the second. Bryce Elder (6-1) overcame four walks to allow two runs in six innings, leaving his NL-leading ERA at 2.44.

Giants 3, Blue Jays 0: Thairo Estrada had a two-run double and scored a run, Alex Wood and three relievers combined on an eight-hitter as visiting San Francisco won for the 13th time in 15 games and improved to 10-0 on the road in June.

After opener Ryan Walker pitched the first, Wood (3-2) followed with five-plus innings, allowing five hits. He walked none and struck out seven.

Marlins 10, Red Sox 1: Bryan De La Cruz hit a two-run homer, Jean Segura added a solo shot and visiting Florida banged out 19 hits and beat Boston for its fourth win in five games.

Jazz Chisholm contributed three RBIs in his return from a 38-game absence with a right turf toe injury.

Luis Arraez struck out for the first time since June 14. He had a single and RBI double to extend his hitting streak to 10 games. He went 2-for-5 and his batting average stayed at .399.

Cardinals 4, Astros 2: Jordan Montgomery pitched six-hit ball into the seventh inning in his second straight win, and host St. Louis beat Houston.

Paul DeJong homered for the Cardinals and Nolan Arenado had two hits, including an RBI double in the first meeting between the teams since July 2019.

Pirates 9, Padres 4: Nick Gonzales homered and tripled in his first home game at PNC Park, and Pittsburgh beat San Diego.

Gonzales tripled in the second inning for his first major league hit and poked a 442-foot solo homer in the seventh. Carlos Santana had three hits, including his seventh homer of the season.

Phillies 5, Cubs 1: Brandon

Marsh homered twice and drove in three runs, helping visiting Philadelphia beat Chicago for its second straight win.

Lefty Ranger Suárez (2-2) pitched four-hit ball into the eighth inning in a game played in a strong smoky haze caused by Canadian wildfires. He was charged with one run and struck out eight in 7⅓ innings.

Guardians 2, Royals 1: Gavin Williams held Kansas City to one hit through seven innings in his second major league start, Will Brennan hit a two-run double in the ninth inning, and visiting Cleveland rallied for the victory.

Williams, Cleveland's top pitching prospect, struck out six, walked one and needed only 92 pitches to get through seven innings.

Guardians manager Terry Francona missed the game. He felt ill earlier Tuesday and was taken to a hospital to be evaluated because of his medical history.

Rangers 8, Tigers 3: Ezequiel Duran's solo home run into the second deck in left sparked a five-run eighth inning as host Texas topped Detroit.

After Duran's 10th homer of the season, Texas pulled away with RBI hits by Corey Seager and Nathaniel Lowe, and Adolis Garcia's two-run homer, all off Anthony Misiewicz.

Reds 3, Orioles 1: Andrew Abbott struck out eight and Matt McLain and TJ Friedl homered in visiting Cincinnati's win over Baltimore in a game delayed for 1 hour, 43 minutes by rain after the seventh inning.

McLain also hit an RBI double for the Reds, who had dropped three in a row following a 12-game winning streak.

Nationals 7, Mariners 4 (11): Jordan Weems worked out of a bases-loaded, none-out jam in the 10th inning against the heart of Seattle's order and Lane Thomas hit a two-run double in the 11th to give visiting Washington the victory.

76ers unsure of futures for Harden, Harris

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — James Harden might have side-eyed questions this week — much like he did in a playful reaction in his Houston days — about his future with the Philadelphia 76ers.

But the issue is real in Philly: Will Harden return to the 76ers for a third season?

All signs point to Harden declining his \$35.6 million option Thursday and entering this summer as an unrestricted free agent. That leaves the 2018 NBA MVP and 10-time All-Star free to sign with any team.

A return to the Rockets? Perhaps, if he prioritizes cash over a championship chase. The 76ers? Depends. Does Harden really enjoy playing as the second option to NBA MVP Joel Embiid?

Plan C?

Harden might not have planned much beyond a potential Houston reunion or Sixers return. Philadelphia has the home-contract edge: The 76ers have the right to offer Harden a

\$210 million, four-year deal, \$8 million more overall than any other team.

Houston, though, where Harden blossomed into a surefire Hall of Famer, is a city that still tugs at his heart.

Nick Nurse, hired earlier this month to replace Doc Rivers as coach of the 76ers, wants a shot at coaching Harden.

“James has a decision to make, and I’d be very happy if he came back,” Nurse said when he was hired.

Tobias Harris, himself in a bit of a contract quandary this summer, also stumped for a Harden return as he grabbed rebounds and posed for selfies with children Tuesday at a Fanatics promotion.

“There’s not many guys that can go out and drop 40 in a playoff game. I think that goes under the radar a little bit too much,” Harris said. “I think James is a phenomenal player, somebody who works his tail off, and somebody’s who’s an overall great leader. Of course I want him back.”

Harden, who turns 34 in August, played the last few months with nagging left Achilles soreness and flashed only glimpses of his Houston prime. He scored 45 points in Game 1 and 42 in Game 4 victories of the Eastern Conference semifinal loss against Boston, and was 0-for-6 on threes in Game 2 and Game 6 losses. He scored only nine points in Game 7, and that included going scoreless in the second half.

Stuck in the muck of salary cap restrictions, the 76ers have few real options to replace Harden should he sign elsewhere. Not only that, the Sixers are fielding trade offers for Harris, who enters the final season of a \$180-million, five-year contract. Harris averaged 14.7 points last season, well behind NBA scoring champ Embiid, Harden and Tyrese Maxey.

Torrel Harris, Tobias Harris’ father and agent, blasted the way the 76ers have used Harris since 2018 and said on the “Business of Sports” podcast that his son was an “assassin

scorer.”

“I mean, they can’t stop him,” Torrel Harris said on the podcast. “Nobody in the league can stop him. So he’s proven that over his career, even when he was with the Clippers.”

Harris has the all-important expiring contract that the 76ers can dangle as trade bait. While his dad believed Harris is still a prime scorer, the 76ers forward wants to put a freeze on public negotiations.

“When I’m a father, I’m going to tell my kid he’s better than LeBron James,” Harris said. “But I’ve also told him as a dad and agent not to speak for me when it comes to the media. Obviously, he has his viewpoint on that. But that’s not the way I feel. I knew going into last year what my role was and I was going to be the fourth option offensively. I knew that going in.”

Harris said he was “OK” with that role and knew if the 76ers were going to win a championship, he would be the player to “sacrifice from that group.”

Fantilli keeping options open ahead of NHL Draft

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — In a different year, this NHL Draft might have been considered the chase for Adam Fantilli as the top pick rather than the Connor Bedard sweepstakes.

Fantilli’s got the size at 6-foot-2 and 195 pounds, and a proven ability to put the puck in the net. The pandemic led the Canadian to the United States, where he became only the third freshman to win college hockey’s Hobey Baker player of the year award joining Jack Eichel (2015) and Hall of Famer Paul Kariya (1993).

Whatever twists of fate might have Fantilli headed to Anaheim with the No. 2 pick overall or Columbus at No. 3 instead of Chicago with the first selection Wednesday night, the center insists he has no regrets about what might have been.

“You can’t really play another game now,” Fantilli said Tuesday. “You can’t score another goal now. So obviously Con-

nor’s season was phenomenal, and everything he’s done up until that point has been great. So I just want to sit back and enjoy it as much as I can.”

Fantilli certainly has the resume.

The native of Nobleton, Ontario, first went to the USHL and played with the Chicago Steel in 2021. He helped the Steel win the USHL Clark Cup as a rookie, and Fantilli was named the playoff MVP after he scored eight goals with nine points in eight games.

Fantilli was expected to move to the OHL before a visit to Michigan’s campus led him to change paths. He made quite the impression as a freshman.

The Canadian led all U.S. college players with 65 points. He also tied for the lead with 30 goals in 36 games, capping his season in rare territory by taking home the Hobey Baker award. He helped the Wolverines reach the NCAA Frozen Four, where they lost to Quinnipiac in the semifinals.

His production is why NHL Central Scouting ranked Fantilli as the No. 2 North American skater. Director Dan Marr noted Bedard has had scouts and coaches watching him the past three years as a potential “generational-type player.” Marr also believes Fantilli will help define a franchise.

“We’re in a situation here — you have Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl,” Marr said, referring to Edmonton’s star duo. “That’s Connor and Adam. So you’re going to win with both. You’re not going to go wrong with both.”

Fantilli turns 20 in October, while Bedard won’t be 18 until July 17. The experience of playing college hockey also means that Fantilli has experience playing against players as old as 23 while also living on his own, even if it was in a dormitory.

Fantilli also met people from all over the world he feels has helped him mature both as a person and a player.